



Lake County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Daniel A. Dunlap
104 East Erie St., Painesville, Ohio

2009 Annual Report

Corrections

Division

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WITTS

PROGRAM

2009 ANNUAL REPORT – WITTS PROGRAM

Lt. Cynthia Brooks

Overview of the Women In Transition Through Support Program



*I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries
of the brain, to be immeasurably worse than any torture
of the body.*

- Charles Dickens on solitary confinement, *American
Notes*, 1842

Mission Statement

Our mission is to assist women in reuniting with a positive and healthy environment that minimizes the circumstances that lead to their repeated incarceration. Our focus is to increase their employment skills, develop positive relationship values and support, elevate their educational level, build self-esteem, control choices through anger management, build strength through drug and alcohol treatment, as well as developing strong family structures.

Goals

Our goal is to reintegrate women and inspire them to be positive and productive citizens that will decrease the potential for repeated incarceration.

Discussion

There is a common perception that the criminal behavior of women and the delinquent behavior of girls are not serious problems. Incarceration of females has been growing at an alarming rate. Women's Prisons in the United States have increased in the past 20 years by 800%. Female inmates represent about 13 percent of the jail population, a 2.5 percent increase over the past decade; According to the Women's Prison Association each year 5,000-10,000 women enter prison already pregnant. According to the Department of Justice, 170% of the women in prison or under correctional supervision are mothers, 1.3 million children are affected. (*The Department of Justice 2006 report*). More than 200,000 of these women are confined in state and federal prisons or local jails. (Paige M. Harrison and Allen J. Beck, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2005*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2006) The majority of these women come from socially and economically troubled backgrounds that lead them into a life of crime. 60 percent of incarcerated women were not employed full-time when they were arrested, and 37 percent had incomes under \$600 in the month leading up to their arrest, compared with 40 percent and 28 percent of men, respectively.

Nearly one-third (30%) of women were receiving welfare benefits prior to their arrest. (www.sentencingproject.org)

According to The National Criminal Justice Service (NJCS) IN 2003:

- 23.2% of arrests were of females.
- 20.4% of arrests of females in the United States were of persons under the age of 18.
- 7% of arrests of females were of persons under the age of 15.

There are currently more than 14,000 girls incarcerated in the United States. Most of these girls are arrested for minor, nonviolent offenses and probation violations. Locked up under the guise of rehabilitation, girls nationwide – the vast majority of whom have been sexually and/or physically abused – are subjected to punitive solitary confinement, routine strip searches, and other forms of abuse. Meanwhile, they are denied the mental health care, education, and social services they need. Far from helping girls cope with the trauma they have suffered, youth prisons re-traumatize them and further impede their rehabilitation. (ACLU)

In 2008, females accounted for 30% of juvenile arrests. Law enforcement agencies made 629,800 arrests of females younger than age 18 in 2008. From 1999 through 2008, arrests of juvenile females decreased less than male arrests in most offense categories (e.g., aggravated assault and burglary); in some categories (e.g., simple assault, larceny-theft, and DUI), female arrests increased while male arrests decreased (*Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Juvenile Arrest 2008*).



Why Do Juveniles Commit Crimes?

There are several risk factors specific to juvenile crime. Juveniles living in poverty stricken areas are often exposed to violence and drug abuse very early. Getting into "the wrong crowd" is another common risk factor, as is having easy access to firearms. Broken or unstable families can be among the highest risk factors for juvenile offenders, as can family violence. Another major risk factor is the influence from the media that almost every child in the country receives on a daily basis (*Angela Atkinson eHow Contributing Writing*).

Prevention/Solution

Since the primary risk factor seems to be poor family structure or function, the best way parents can ensure that their children avoid becoming a juvenile offender is to remain actively involved in their child's day to day life. That means staying informed and involved with their school work, friends, and extracurricular activities. Plus, studies show that children who sit down to eat dinner with their families on a regular basis are at reduced risk for drug use, alcohol and tobacco use, and of becoming a juvenile offender (*Angela Atkinson eHow Contributing Writing*).

Why Focus on Women Offenders?

If we get it right with the women, hopefully it can benefit the male population. The women are raising our next generations and 1.3 million children under the age of 18 have mothers that are incarcerated.

Who suffers the most when women are incarcerated?

The children do a harder jail and/or prison sentence than their mother's do. Most children are being raised by grandparents, typically grandmothers. About 1 in 4 report the minor child lives with the father, and 10% are placed in foster or group homes. It can cost over \$100,000 a year to lock up a woman and place her children in foster care (WPA Institute on Women & Criminal Justice).

What's at Stake?

Most women during incarceration lose their housing, children and any public assistance that they were receiving. Upon release they are usually given a bus token and have pocket change and told not to go back to what they were doing that led them to their incarceration. Many times when women return to the community they have not improved their coping skills, resources, or support systems. Not surprisingly, the end result is that within three years of leaving incarceration, 101 will commit a new offense and sixty-nine will go back to jail. Of the 177 (on average) women released per day, they will be 35 years old, fifty-seven will be white, eighty-two will be black and twenty-nine will be Hispanic. Fewer than forty-four will be married, and 118 will have minor children. Of those with children, twenty-six will have an alcohol dependence problem and thirty-seven will have a diagnosed mental illness. Seventy-four will not have finished high school, and more than half were unemployed before arrest (Aborn, 2005).

In addition, they have more medical needs such as pregnancy and higher rates of communicable diseases such as STD's and HIV. These difficulties can be better understood after considering the background and experiences of the average incarcerated woman.

The average daily female population of the Lake County Jail, in **2009** was **54** compared to **59** in **2008**. The overall number of incarcerated women in Lake County has increased by 10% from the previous year in 2008 the total group attendance was 1033 and in 2009 the total group attendance was 1221. The Lake County Sheriff's Office in collaboration with the Lake County Policymakers have a responsibility to support our female population in obtaining a successful transition back to the community. In 2001 The Women in Transition Through Support (WITTS) was started at the Lake County Jail. The program was created in an attempt to decrease conflict/disruptive behavior among the female inmates by offering peer groups in the jail. Today the WITTS program has expanded to include eight groups and an aftercare program specifically targeting the unique needs of female inmates, and a continuum of care that supports effective transition to the community by providing discharge planning, linkage and referral, and support upon release.

WITTS Grant

The WITTS sessions are all facilitated by volunteers however, WITTS has been awarded a JAG grant for the calendar year of 2010. The OCJS (Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services) has provided a grant in the amount of \$34,636.80. This is a 9% increase from 2009 funding (\$31,092). Neighboring will continue to provide the 25% cash match for the WITTS grant. The grant money is used for:

- Educational materials for jail groups and aftercare (i.e. notebooks/journals, paper, reading materials, writing utensils, copies of reading materials, and art supplies for art therapy).
- Wrap around funds for client needs i.e. emergency hotel stays, bus tokens, rental assistance, clothing assistance, food, utility assistance, and any other emergency needs for women who are released from jail with no place to go.
- Travel of staff to community sites, the jail, and client homes.
- The Community Liaison position and supervision by the Forensic team Supervisor at Neighboring.



Community Liaison

The Community Liaison works as part of an interdisciplinary criminal justice team for the purpose of providing comprehensive services to women during incarceration, supporting their successful return to the community. She collaborates with clients to develop individualized discharge plans that address clients needs, incorporate client preferences for services, work toward client-selected goals, and monitor the implementation of the plan and progress toward goals. The community liaison is knowledgeable of, and makes referrals to appropriate community resources, and serves as a client advocate in

navigating various health, education, housing, and social service systems to obtain necessary supports.

The community liaison is also responsible for networking and maintaining professional relationships with law enforcement, courts, community health and social service agencies and personnel to promote effective coordination of services for program clients.

Finally the community liaison maintains an ongoing database/tracking of each woman referred, from point of contact to final release from the criminal justice system. She maintains complete and timely documentation of services provided to clients, in accordance with all applicable agency standards and in compliance with all relevant certification and accreditation guidelines.

What's New with the Community Liasion?

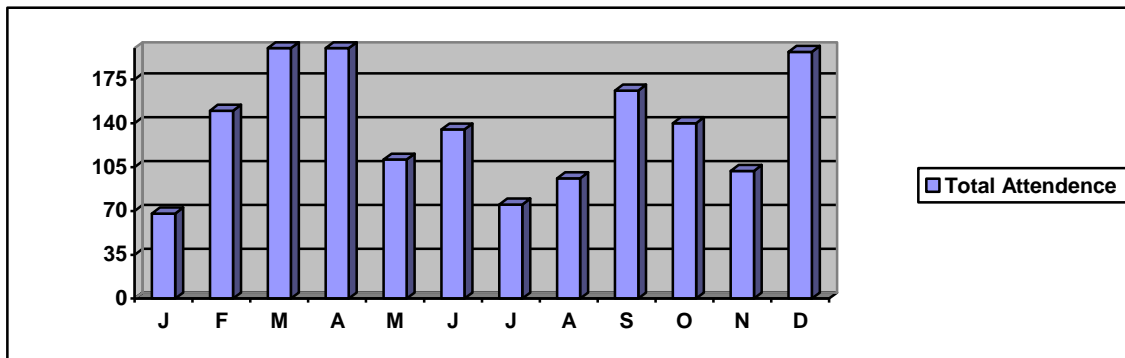
The Community Liaison is currently working on a recidivism study of WITTS participants. One of the program objectives is to maintain at 70% the number of women who stayed out of jail for one year post release. The Community Liaison is compiling statistics from 2006 – 2009 to illustrate WITTS recidivism rates. The project will also look at some of the reasons and individual situations that can lead to re-incarceration, as well as, WITTS recidivism rates compared to nationwide rates.

Another project that will begin in 2010 is WITTS Case Studies. WITTS staff will identify several incarcerated females who have been in and out of the system for years and complete case studies. The subjects will agree to be “followed” for a period of time after release for research purposes. The case studies will explore participants’ family history, criminal history, employment history and other socioeconomic factors. The WITTS program will conduct this project to gain a better understanding of the incarceration cycle of the female offender.

By the Numbers

The graph below reflects the overall attendance for eight programs offered throughout the year. These programs include:

- Victims of Domestic Violence
- Parenting / Speaker Series
- Yoga
- Monday Workshops
- Girl Scouts Behind Bars
- Families of Promise
- Art Therapy



ABOUT OUR PARTICIPANTS

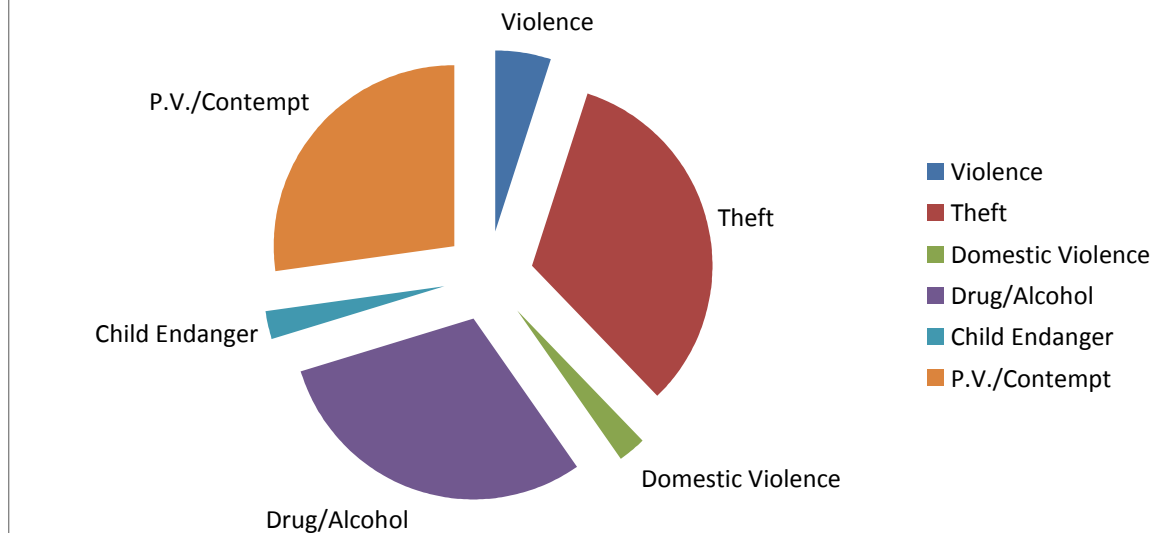
There were 252 participants for 2009. The number is down from the previous year by 8.5%. The average daily female population of the jail was down in 2009 by 8.86% from 2008. The number of out of county inmates overall has dropped by 33%. The number of USMS females participating is down from 2008 due to low numbers of USMS inmates overall, contributing to lower numbers in participation.



NATURE OF OFFENSES

- 4.76%** of participants had charges that are violent in nature. IE **Assault, Robbery, Murder**
- 2.38 %** of participants had charges related to **Domestic Violence**
- 26.2%** had charges related to **Probation Violations and Contempt of Court**
- 28.9 %** of participants had **Drug or Alcohol** related charges
- 31.7%** of participants had **Theft** related charges

Nature of Offenses



Indications:

- While Domestic Violence charges among participants holds the lowest percentage of overall offenses, over 32.5% of them participated in the Domestic Violence workshops. This indicates that females are almost 17 times more likely to be a “victim” of Domestic Violence than to be the “aggressor” in those situations.

Statistics on Domestic Violence:

- ✓ *Every 9 seconds, a woman is abused.*
- ✓ *3 to 10 million children witness domestic violence every year.*
- ✓ *Each year, upwards of one million incidents of domestic violence occur.*
- ✓ *A third of Americans say they know a woman whose husband or boyfriend has physically abused her in the past year.*
- ✓ *Domestic violence is a significant cause of homelessness.*
- ✓ *One in five female high school students report being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner.*
- ✓ *More than 3 women are murdered by their former or current husbands or boyfriends daily.*
- ✓ *It is estimated that domestic violence costs the national economy \$8 to \$10 billion each year in medical bills, lost wages and productivity, and other costs*
- ✓ *Battered women are 4 to 5 times more likely than non battered women to require psychiatric treatment and 5 times more likely to attempt suicide.*
- ✓ *The FBI estimates that only about 10% of domestic violence is reported to the police.*

- Female offenders are less likely to commit crimes of violence than their male counterparts. Over 87% of participants are non-violent offenders.
- Many females find it difficult to fulfill their obligations to their respective courts due to factors such as no transportation, lack of jobs or money to pay fines, drug or alcohol relapses and mental health issues.
- Theft related offenders make up the largest group in the program. This indicates that due to economic times, joblessness, substance abuse and lack of support are a large portion of issues facing the female offenders.

A study in support of the rate of recidivism for those who participated in the WITTS program is in the process of being conducted beginning 2006 to 2009 and will not be available until 2011.

The **“Art therapy”** group uses the creative process to improve and enhance the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. The sessions are conducted on Monday's.

The **“Female Support”** group focuses on stress associated with being in jail. The sessions are conducted by Maureen Leitch of Neighboring on Tuesday mornings.

The **“Victim's”** Of Domestic Violence class is held on Tuesday afternoon. The session basically focuses on being a “Victim” and learning how to cope. The sessions were conducted by Joan Boswell from Forbes House.

The **“Parenting Class”** aides in assisting women with dealing with their children from a new born to adulthood. The group focuses on setting children up for success as well as trying to become a better parent. The sessions are conducted by Terri Worthington from the Ohio State University Extension.

The **“Speakers Series”** covers topics such as nutrition, money management, job preparation and resume writing, child custody, housing, education, resume writing and more. Lake Metropolitan Housing Authority conducts a session on assisting women with obtaining affordable housing. CrossRoads, Lake County Job and Family Services and Family Planning also conduct sessions for the Speakers Series.

The **“Yoga”** class focuses on a healthy mind and body. The group meets on Thursday's. Four certified yoga teachers in a rotation provide weekly classes to the women at the Lake County Jail. The yoga teachers provide this service free of charge as Karma Yoga, or selfless service to others. Teachers include Anne Owens, Paula Gardner, Linda Baron and Anne Ondrey. Mats and blocks are available to the women as props to enhance their practice. The women learn basic yoga postures, breathing exercises and practice relaxation as tools for helping with the stress and challenges of incarceration and preparing for life after incarceration.

The **“Girl Scouts Beyond Bars”** Program is geared towards breaking the cycle of crime by allowing daughters of incarcerated women to be Girl Scouts. It will provide leadership experience to both moms and daughter's, aims to foster the personal and social development of the girls and their moms, increase the moms and daughter's sense of self-worth to enhance their coping skills, allow them to make positive, healthier choices, enhance relationship and communication skills while providing moms and daughter's with leadership experience. Deanna Jarvis of Girls Scouts of North East Ohio (GSNEO) conducts the sessions and recruits mother's and daughters.

Catholic Charities through the **“Families of Promise”** program is designed to support families with incarcerated loved ones. The program helps the non-incarcerated parent to assume the leadership role in the family and help him or her deal with the immediate issues of housing, finances, employment, and the safety and well-being of children. Catholic Churches was able to offer a

Christmas gift program for children whose mothers were incarcerated over the holidays. Several families took advantage of this program and many children were able to receive gifts on Christmas morning that they normally would not received. Senta Kline and Shari Thompson conduct the Families of Promise program.

WITTS Aftercare Program

At the end of 2009, three 12-week sessions of the WITTS Aftercare program were completed. A total of fifteen women have participated in the WITTS Aftercare, with nine successfully completing the 12 week program. WITTS Aftercare is a weekly group held in Painesville and is facilitated by the WITTS Community Liaison. WITTS Aftercare is an organized group of women who offer support to one another during the challenging transition process back into the community from incarceration. The group focuses on peer support and life skills education and is based on a three month rotating curriculum. The educational portion reviews some basic life skills; i.e. coping skills, healthy relationships, anger management and self esteem building. WITTS Aftercare is held weekly on Wednesday afternoons from 1pm-3pm. The aftercare group is open to any female that has been involved with the criminal justice system and is seeking support. Participants can also be ordered by the Lake County courts or as part of their probation to complete WITTS Aftercare program.

What's New !!!!!

During 2008 WITTS integrated core principles from Trauma Addiction Mental Health and Recovery (TAMAR) into the group programming at the jail. TAMAR is an evidence-based integrated treatment approach designed for women who are mentally ill, substance abusing and are victims of trauma. Typically, over 80% of women in jail meet these criteria. Goals of the TAMAR program include a reduction in recidivism, improved jail operation, reduction in disruptive behaviors, reduction of symptoms, and improved coping skills for participants.

The challenges associated with reentry from jail are daunting—large in scale and complex in task. Each year, U.S. jails process an estimated 12 million admissions and releases. That translates into 34,000 people released from jails each day and 230,000 released each week. In three weeks, jails have contact with as many people as prisons do in an entire year, presenting numerous opportunities for intervention.

The lives of many who cycle in and out of jail are unstable at best. Substance addiction, job and housing instability, mental illness, and a host of health problems are part of the day-to-day realities for a significant share of this population. Given that more than 80 percent of inmates are incarcerated for less than 1 month—many for only a few hours or days—jails have little time or capacity to address these deep-rooted and often overlapping issues. Moreover, no single organization or political leader in the community is responsible—or held accountable—for improving reentry outcomes (Urban Institute, 2008).



Resources

We intend to continue to create a network of agencies and businesses designed to meet the needs of each individual. This network of professionals will assist these female offenders during incarceration by providing treatment and counseling services to help effect a positive change in their lives. Upon release these services will continue by tracking and maintaining communication and assistance with the program participants so that their continued rehabilitation and success will be better enabled to be achieved.

Contributing Networking Agencies:

Neighboring
Extended Housing
Women's Center Lakeland Community College
Job and Family Services
Victims Assistance Program
Forbes House
Atma Center
Ohio State University Extension
Girl Scouts of North East Ohio
Lake Metropolitan Housing Authority

The following will be addressed:

Art Therapy
Planning Goals
Domestic Violence
GED
Relationships
Self -Esteem
Female Inmate Support Group
Dealing with Stress
Trust
Problem solving
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Anger Management
Yoga
Parenting
Housing

The WITTS committee is looking forward to what's to come in 2010. The WITTS program is always **looking for interested volunteers** to assist with various program activities. To learn more about volunteer possibilities please contact the WITTS Community Liaison, Maureen Leitch at 440-639-3549 or any of the team members at Lake County Sheriff's Office at 440-350-5602.

Team Members:

Lt. Cynthia Brooks
Sgt. Barbara Morris
Sgt. Michele Prather
CO Dona Cox
CO Elisa Smith
CO Alice Wilcox